COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Colchester, CT

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 4, 2021
BOE Budget Committee Meeting 9:00AM
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Jessica Morozowich, Joanne Rose
ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Superintendent Jeffrey Burt, CFO Maggie Cosgrove, Director of Educational Operations Mario Hurtado
OTHERS PRESENT: BOE Chair Mary Tomasi, BOE Member Amy Domeika, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Amy Trinnaman

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Call to Order

Chair Morozowich called the meeting to order at 9:01AM.

2. ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

3.1 Public Comment

None.

4. *APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 Approval of February 4, 2021 Minutes

Motion by: J. Rose
To approve the minutes of the February 4, 2021 Budget Committee meeting.
Second by: J. Morozowich
Vote: Unanimous
Roll call: J. Rose, J. Morozowich

5. *PRIORITY DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

None.

6. BUDGET REPORTS

6.1 Monthly Budget Reports

CFO Maggie Cosgrove presented the budget report through the end of February 2021. Line items that are overexpended specifically relate to special education. Excess cost reimbursement grants will cover the overages in special education out-of-district placements line items. The special education transportation line does not reflect all costs due to the hybrid schedule, and the fluctuating level of services.

Discussion of the status of several line items ensued (reviewing discussion from previous meetings). The month of February is a pivotal time for determining how several line items will be impacted (e.g., fuel, utility usage, overtime for snow removal). Use of daily substitutes is historically higher in the Spring. Stipends for spring sports coaching positions are expected to be incurred.

6.2 Cafeteria Fund

Preliminary numbers for February remain on target with what was projected for the overall year-end deficit, but we will continue to monitor and revise financial projections monthly. Reimbursements are specific to the number of meals served. March's reimbursement will be similar to January's level. We are waiting for clarification as to whether we can cover the deficit with ESSER II Grant funds. It has yet to be determined whether the District will continue providing meals in the summer.

6.3 Health Insurance Reserve

CFO Cosgrove presented a report through the end of January 2021. Anthem's platform change delayed the processing of administration fees for January. These delays slightly skew the report, but there are no significant fluctuations in claims. The Finance Department has also had to spend time assisting employees with some claims processing issues since the change in Anthem's system.

6.4 Special Education Excess Cost Report

Tuition budget forecasts and projections are accurate, but transportation costs continue to be challenging to estimate. Transportation costs reflected on the report are based on bills we are receiving but are over expected costs. The Pupil Services and Special Education Department is working with the provider to review and correct all billing issues. There have been no issues with the services provided. The transportation component is fluctuating as students are at times in person and at times remote learning. Extended School Year provides additional services for students in need of continued summer education.

6.5 Use of Schools

No report at this time.

6.6 Capital Reserve

No report at this time.

6.7 Budget Transfers Under $5,000

Two budget transfers under $5,000 were presented as information items:

1. $4,745 was available within the Technology budget; funds are needed for State testing to have 1 to 1 devices.
2. $350 was available in the Curriculum budget due to travel funds not utilized to the fullest extent due to COVID-19. Budget transfer is for professional development in PowerSchool Virtual User Group.

7. OLD BUSINESS

7.1 Update on ESSER II Grant

Superintendent Burt shared that we are taking a very close look at how ESSER II Grant funds can be utilized on needs such as intervention, tutoring, social/emotional needs, extended school year, recovering learning, needs of voluntary at-home learners and homeschooled students. Director of Teaching and Learning Dr. Hewes is reviewing data on student performance, especially of students who have multiple risk factors (attendance and performance). We are exploring creative solutions to recover learning and engage learners who are struggling. Budget components that can be covered by ESSER II Grants will be explicit in the proposed budget to be presented to the BOE on March 9th. A more specific plan for utilizing ESSER II grant funding will be presented at the next regular meeting of the Board of Education on March 30, 2021.

The ESSER grant in the amount of $937,826 will allow for academic supports, safety, technology, social/emotional learning as related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds will supplement, not supplant, efforts to recovering the learning initiatives, including possible additional tutoring and student support.

8. *NEW BUSINESS

8.1 Budget Transfer Over $5,000

None.

8.2 2021-22 Budget Discussion

Budget discussions with each school and department reviewed each line item in preparation of the 2021-2022 budget. Budget priorities include special education needs, improvements in technology and facilities, retaining existing staff, providing additional services to struggling students, and addressing the increasing need to recover learning lost during the pandemic. Discussion ensued on the importance of school counselors in supporting students in social/emotional ways while also helping them prepare for postsecondary opportunities.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NEW ISSUES RAISED OR SUBJECTS DEVELOPED

9.1 Public Comment

None.

10. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.